

WORKINGTON
URBAN SANITARY AUTHORITY.



ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH,
FOR THE YEAR 1898,
BY
JOHN HIGGET,
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

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*To the Chairman and Members of the Workington
Urban Sanitary Authority.*

ANNUAL REPORT

OF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH,
FOR YEAR 1898.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

In submitting to you this, my Annual Report, I think it well, at the outset, to state that the statistics which I present are based on an estimated population of 23,490, which represents the return at the last census, but which, as you are aware, can hardly be said to indicate the true strength of your district.

During the year 816 births were registered in your district of which 414 were males and 402 females, being equal to an annual Birth-rate of 34.7 per 1000, as compared with 33.9 for preceding year.

The deaths registered amounted to 479, of which 256 were males and 223 females ; this is equal to an annual Death-rate of 20.3 per 1000 as compared with 14.46 for preceding year.

I append the Death-rate since 1882 :—

In 1882	...	24.4 per 1000.
„ 1883	...	18.2 „
„ 1884	...	16.2 „
„ 1885	...	18.7 „
„ 1886	...	17.7 „
„ 1887	...	18.9 „
„ 1888	...	21 „
„ 1889	...	18 „
„ 1890	...	18.3 „
„ 1891	...	16.6 „
„ 1892	...	16 „
„ 1893	...	16 „
„ 1894	...	14.95 „
„ 1895	...	19.5 „
„ 1896	...	15.8 „
„ 1897	...	14.46 „

The following is a classification of the ages at which the deaths occurred :—

151 under 1 year.

103 over 1 year and under 5 years.

23 „ 5 „ „ 15 „

21 „ 15 „ „ 25 „

98 „ 25 „ „ 60 „

83 „ 60

INFANT MORTALITY was at the rate of 185.04 per 1000, as compared with 124.6 for the preceding year, and included 24 deaths from gastro-enteritis, 19 from convulsions, 18 from bronchitis, 6 from pneumonia, 14 from premature birth, 14 from marasmus, 5 from meningitis, 5 from asthenia, 16 from measles, 1 from croup, 1 from epilepsy, 1 from cardiac disease, 3 from debility, 1 from jaundice, 5 from gastro-intestinal catarrh, 5 from inanition, and 6 from diarrhoea.

THE ZYMOTIC Death-rate was equal to 4.2 per 1000 as compared with .518 for preceding year, and included 2 deaths from enteric fever, 1 from small pox, 1 from puerperal fever, 11 from diarrhoea, 1 from scarlet fever, 1 from whooping cough and 82 from measles.

It may here be stated generally, that measles was mainly responsible for the increase in the Annual, Infant, and Zymotic Death-rates. Not being included in the list of notifiable diseases it is extremely difficult, accurately, to estimate the strength of the epidemic which, in common with many other places, your district suffered from during part of the year ; but that it was severe is clearly shown by the heavy mortality. And this bids me remark that measles is too commonly regarded as a disease of little or no moment and lightly to be looked upon, whereas it cannot be too strongly insisted upon that it is by far the most fatal of the epidemic diseases of child life. In the generality of cases little or no attempt is made to secure isolation, especially in the early stages when it is most highly infectious. It is on the respiratory organs that the main form of the disease most expends itself, hence the

necessity for keeping patients affected in a warm uniform temperature, and preventing them being exposed to draughts or cold weather. Were the little sufferers removed at once to a warm atmosphere and carefully nursed, there would not, I am satisfied, be the same high mortality as generally follows an epidemic of measles.

I found it necessary to extend the usual holidays, and had the schools closed for six weeks while the epidemic was at its highest. Before re-opening they were disinfected and well washed down.

Under the Infectious Diseases (Notification) Act, I have received :—

Scarlet Fever	...	...	31
Enteric Fever	...	...	27
Smallpox	...	...	2
Erysipelas	...	...	14
Puerperal Fever	...	...	1
			<hr/>
			75

ELLERBECK INFECTIOUS HOSPITAL.

During the past year 11 cases have been admitted into your Infectious Hospital of which 2 were Smallpox, 7 Scarlet Fever, and 2 Enteric Fever.

I am glad to be able to report that the loan asked for from the Local Government Board for improvements and alterations has been granted, and your Committee are now about to receive tenders for the commencement of the work at an early date. The want of a proper Infectious Hospital

has been much felt in the past, and it has been a matter of no little difficulty to arrive at a proper solution of the question, due regard having of course to be given to the disposition of the present building, as well as to the securing of due efficiency at a reasonable cost to the public. I think it may be fairly said that all of these have been attained and that when the buildings are completed they will be a credit to the public health department of your district.

SMALLPOX.

It will be in the recollection of your Board that an imported case of smallpox was discovered in the month of May, in a house in Derwent Street, and I mention the matter here because in dealing with it I consider your sanitary staff are to be congratulated on having, without loss of time and at a comparatively trifling expenditure, stamped out what otherwise might have been a very serious and costly epidemic. I will not here go into details as to the measures adopted ; briefly they consisted in immediate removal and isolation, vaccination and re-vaccination of all the persons in the house, the establishment of a state of quarantine, destruction of the clothes, bedding, &c., and a thorough disinfection of the infected premises. No further cases occurred in this district, though I regret to say the undertaker, who conducted the patient's funeral, himself contracted the disease, and had to be removed to the hospital. He made, however, a good recovery, and here our smallpox experiences for the year ended. When we remember what Middlesbrough has just come through, how many lives have been lost and the amount of money

expended, we may well congratulate ourselves on this favourable result, and in any case the money saved will be useful in the matter of our new water supply, and those who think that smallpox is due to imperfect sanitary conditions will no longer be able to point to your intermittent system, should we, unfortunately, ever be visited by an epidemic in the future.

MORTUARY.

Your Board having agreed to my recommendations to provide your district with a Mortuary, and a site having been found in Pinfold, your Surveyor has during this year erected a suitable building which will meet a want long felt and prevent much discomfort in the future.

WATER SUPPLY.

I may, perhaps, be allowed to state that since I had the honour to be appointed your Medical Officer of Health, nothing has given me greater pleasure, or afforded me more complete satisfaction, than the action which you have resolved to take to improve the present water supply. Ever since I took office I have never ceased to insist on the dangers to public health which may arise from an intermittent system, as can be proved by a perusal of my reports for the last ten years. It is therefore, to me, particularly gratifying that you are about to give to your district an abundant and constant supply of good pure water.

THE HOUSING OF THE WORKING CLASSES ACT 1890.

It will be in the recollection of your Board that in March, 1897, I submitted a special report under the above Act in

connection with certain property situate in King Street, and after duly considering the subject for the period of one year, at your monthly meeting held 5th April, 1898, you unanimously passed a resolution “that this Council declares the Medical Officer’s Special Report of March, 1897, as to King Street to be true, and instructs the Street Committee to prepare an improvement scheme.” I am not aware that this command has ever been given effect to, as per the terms of your unanimous resolution, or that an improvement scheme has ever been laid before your Board, but that a change has come over the spirit of your original intentions is made clear by a further resolution—not in this instance, unanimous—passed at your monthly meeting of 3rd January, 1899. The resolution carried by 10 to 7, declares “that inasmuch as some of the members of the Council were not fully conversant with the provisions of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, when they passed the resolution of 5th April, 1898 :—

‘ That the Council declares the Medical Officer’s Report of March, 1897, to be true in substance, and instructs the Street Committee to prepare an improvement scheme, and submit same to the next meeting of the Council.

‘ Nor were cognisant of the heavy liabilities such resolution would unnecessarily entail on the ratepayers, hereby resolve that such resolution be, and the same is hereby rescinded, and direct that application be forthwith made to the Magistrates under the provisions of the said Act for closing orders against all houses mentioned in the said report, and which may now be found by the Medical Officer of Health as unfit for human habitation, these

proceedings to be followed by a further application to the Magistrates for demolishing orders against all such houses as may not have been put into efficient repair and good sanitary condition under the original orders of the Justices."

Of course my responsibility in the matter virtually ended when by your unanimous resolution you admitted the truth of my representation, and yet, I cannot but think it is to be regretted that you did not allow the Street Committee to submit their improvement scheme, so that it might have been accepted or rejected on its merits. I do not know what form such a scheme might have taken, but as an individual, and one responsible for the representation, perhaps I may be allowed to say that I inclined to deal with the whole area scheduled, as to King Street, and not to leave (as will now be done), isolated buildings projecting into the middle of the street like the Apple Tree in Finkle Street, and that I was prepared had the Local Government Board required (which is not at all certain), to advise the Council to proceed with Griffin Street and the Brows, under Part II. of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, and there to erect suitable workmen's dwellings if thought desirable. Such a scheme if carried out would have secured:—

1.—The destruction of a large block of property for the most part insanitary.

2.—The uniform widening of a very important thoroughfare, one of the main entrances to your town.

3.—The acquisition of the whole of the frontage on the east side of King Street.

4.—Suitable sites for workman's dwellings if thought desirable.

I am aware that this is a slight departure from the original representation which I made, but as time went on it became apparent that considerable difficulties were likely to arise in our endeavour to secure an extra strip of land in King Street, and in any case if buildings were to be erected, I favoured the sites offered in Griffin Street and the Brows.

At the present time, special attention is being directed to this matter of the housing of the working classes on account of the close relationship which insanitary dwellings are found to occupy with regard to the production of tubercular diseases. The evidence on this point seems to be overwhelming, and it is more than probable that in any serious attempt that is made to grapple with this question the connection between the two will receive more consideration than has yet been given to it. To make a Utopia may not be possible, but that much yet remains to be done towards improving the dwellings of the working classes no sensible man can deny. For my part, I should like to see this Act of 1890 simplified, and I am not without hopes that the present crusade against consumption will secure for us at the hands of the legislature some such needed reform.

I append a report from and a summary of nuisances dealt with by your Inspector, Mr. Sheldon, and have again

to acknowledge the great assistance I have received from him during the year.

I am,

Yours respectfully,

JOHN HIGHET,

Medical Officer of Health.

SANITARY INSPECTOR'S REPORT.

Sanitary Inspector's Office,

Town Hall, Workington,

January 11th, 1899.

TO JOHN HIGHET, ESQ., M.D., M.O.H.

Dear Sir,

I have the honour to submit for incorporation with your Annual Report a summary of the work done in my department during the year ending December 31st, 1898.

INSPECTION OF THE BOROUGH.

As in previous years, a systematic and general inspection of back lanes, open spaces, yards, &c., has been carried out in addition to house to house inspection as far as other duties would permit.

Many of the back lanes in various parts of the district are in a very unsatisfactory condition owing to the want of paving and adequate drainage, and until this necessary work is done, no perceptible improvement can be effected.

During the above period, 468 nuisances were discovered and dealt with as per annexed schedule, and I am pleased to report that it has not been found necessary to resort to legal proceedings to enforce the abatement of any ordinary nuisance reported upon.

NATURE OF NUISANCE.			Number
For Cleansing dirty houses	...	...	5
„ Over-crowding in houses	...	...	7
„ Limewashing Premises	...	...	16
„ Abatement of smoke nuisances	...	...	3
„ Houses put into habitual repair	...	..	15
„ Nuisances from poultry keeping	...	...	50
„ Repairs to spouts, etc.	...	...	20
„ Providing drainage	...	...	3
„ Cleansing choked drains	...	...	43
„ Cleansing choked and filthy water closets	...	...	58
„ Repairs to defective drains	...	...	42
„ Repairs to defective gullies	...	...	9
„ Repairs to defective water closets	...	...	133
„ Defective pavement in yards	...	...	8
„ Accumulation of manure	...	...	3
„ Removal of swine	...	...	3
„ Abatement of nuisance in urinals	...	..	6
„ Better ventilation of water closets	...	...	6
„ Defective slop stone pipes	...	...	5
„ Waste water pipes out of order	...	...	8
„ Sanitary conveniences provided	...	...	8
Miscellaneous, not included in the above	...	...	17

468

SLAUGHTER HOUSES.

The Borough Slaughter Houses have been twice limewashed during the year, and have been visited on an average four times weekly, I have not seen anything during the year to justify seizure.

The private Slaughter Houses at Elizabeth Street, and at North Side, Harrington, are in good order and well conducted.

TENTS AND VANS.

I have during the year visited all travelling Vans of which I have been cognisant, and have met with no instance of over-crowding, zymotic or other diseases.

BAKEHOUSES, WORKSHOPS, ETC.

These have been periodically visited and general cleansing attended to, several occupiers of workrooms not previously registered at once complied with the requirements of the Factory and Workshops Acts of 1891 and 1895, upon a verbal representation that it was binding upon them to do so ; in several instances better ventilation provided, and in three cases over-crowding abated among dressmakers.

MARKETS.

These have been regularly visited with a view to food inspection, and while I am bound to say that a large quantity of meat, imported principally from County Abattiors, has been of a very questionable character, I did not feel justified in seizing the same, and in only one case in which some 60lbs weight of unsound fish was exposed, has

it been necessary to do so ; in the latter instance, the fish were destroyed by an order of the Magistrates, a fine of 40/- being subsequently imposed.

DAIRIES, COWSHEDS, AND MILKSHOPS.

Within the Borough there are 44 registered Cowkeepers and Milksellers ; the Dairies and Workshops are as a rule kept clean and in good order, and except a few instances of over-crowded byres during the year I have to report these as generally satisfactory.

COMMON LODGING HOUSES.

Of these, there are seven registered keepers, and they are upon the whole well conducted, and having regard to the localities, in a fair sanitary condition ; the houses in the aggregate contain 45 bedrooms with accommodation for 152 casuals.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

During the year 75 cases have been reported :—

Scarlet Fever, 31 cases in 20 houses.

Enteric Fever, 27 cases in 26 houses.

Erysipelas, 14 cases in 14 houses.

Smallpox, 2 cases in 2 houses.

Puerperal Fever, 1 case.

Of the above number of cases, 11 have been removed to Ellerbeck for treatment, the disinfection of the houses, bedding, &c., attended to, and where sanitary defects existed, steps were at once taken to get them remedied.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

WM. SHELDON.

